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SUBJECT: TAIWAN REACTION TO TIP DOWNGRADE: SUBDUE IN
PUBLIC, DISAPPOINTED IN PRIVATE

REF: STATE 98061

1. (SBU) Public reaction to Taiwan's downgrade from "Tier 1" to "Tier 2" in the 2005 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report has been surprisingly subdued. Press coverage, in fact, was so light that AIT did not proceed with inviting the Taiwan media to a coffee with the Deputy Director on June 6. On June 5, five Taiwan newspapers covered the Department's June 3 TIP report release. These articles were all "straight" news reports without any commentary. Only two of the articles mentioned Taiwan government reaction. Privately, Taiwan officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) told AIT they did not understand why Taiwan had been downgraded when Taipei had done all that the USG had requested.

2. (SBU) Chinese language newspapers "China Times," "Liberty Times," and "Apple Daily" all reported that Taiwan had been downgraded because of insufficient protection for trafficking victims, particularly for women and girls from the PRC. The "China Times" article quoted Justice Minister Shih Mao-ling as saying the PRC and Taiwan should put aside political differences and work together to combat human trafficking between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The "Liberty Times" article quoted a statement by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) that Taiwan regards human trafficking as a very important issue and will continue to take appropriate action to repatriate Chinese trafficking victims. English language dailies "China Post" and "Taiwan News" did not publish their own articles, but rather used international wire services to report on the TIP report.

3. (SBU) AIT delivered the news of Taiwan's official downgrade from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to MOFA and MOI on June 3, about eight hours before the Secretary's scheduled announcement in Washington. When AIT arrived, MOI Vice Minister Chien Tai-lang said "I hope you are bringing good news." Both Chien and MOFA North American Affairs Director Victor Chin said they could not understand Taiwan's downgrade, particularly since Taiwan authorities had been so cooperative and done all that the USG had asked on TIP. AIT used the talking-points from Washington (reftel) to explain the issue of "inadequate protection," the primary reason for the downgrade. AIT explained that the UN Protocol stipulates that protection of trafficking victims who cooperate with prosecutors means making residence permits available as an alternative to sending victims back to countries where they face retribution. Chien and Chin expressed doubt that Taiwan could implement this policy, noting that if PRC citizens learned that Taiwan grants TIP victims residence permits, the flood gates of illegal immigration would open.

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